

## Slough Borough Council

<b>Report To:</b>	Council
<b>Date:</b>	26 <sup>th</sup> January 2023
<b>Subject:</b>	Review of Polling Districts, Places and Stations 2022/23
<b>Chief Officer:</b>	Returning Officer/Electoral Registration Officer
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Mike Summerville, AEA Elections Consultant & Fiona Ahern, Electoral Services Manager
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Exempt:</b>	No
<b>Appendices:</b>	Appendix A – Maps of all 21 new wards with proposed polling districts and places Appendix B - Labour Party formal response Appendix C – Labour Party (Upton Lea ward suggested revision to map)

### **1. Summary and Recommendations**

- 1.1 Following the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) review of the Council's ward arrangements, the number of wards in Slough will increase from 15 to 21 at the next local elections in May 2023. This report updates the Council of the outcome of the review of polling districts and places and seeks approval for the list of designated places as set out in Appendix A.
- 1.2 An informal member working group has allowed for cross party elected member input to the review and a public consultation was held between 4<sup>th</sup> January 2023 and 18<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

### **Recommendations:**

Council is recommended to:

- (a) Approve the new polling districts and places scheme as set out in the review taking into account any comments and observations received during the consultation stage (see part 3 of report below)

### **Reason:**

It is a statutory requirement for a local authority to keep all polling arrangements under review and to establish a polling place within each polling district wherever possible. This review was conducted to reflect the new warding arrangements for Slough to come into effect for the elections on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2023, and take into account comments from Members, interested parties and residents.

## **Commissioner Review**

Commissioners have reviewed the report and have no observations on the report.

## **2. Report**

### **Introductory paragraph**

- 2.1 This report details the outcomes of the polling district and places review prompted by the new ward boundaries for Slough.

### **Background**

- 2.2 The Council agreed on 18th January 2022 to move to whole Council elections from 2023 and to request the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to conduct an electoral review for the purpose of designing a pattern of wards consistent with the move to whole Council elections.
- 2.3 The LGBCEs final recommendations were published on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and the new warding arrangements will come into effect for the May 2023 borough elections.
- 2.4 There will be a new pattern of wards with 21 two-councillor wards across the borough replacing the current 15 wards (13 three-councillor wards, 1 two-councillor ward and 1 one-councillor ward). The total number of councillors therefore remains unchanged at 42.
- 2.5 Following receipt of the LGBCEs final recommendations the Electoral Cycle & Parliamentary Boundary Review Working Party working alongside Electoral Services have created and agreed a new polling district and place scheme to best fit the new wards and serve a current electorate of 99,635 voters:
- A total of 45 polling districts have been created each with a polling station
  - There will be 18 wards with 2 polling districts and 3 wards with 3 polling districts
  - Existing polling stations have been used wherever possible for the convenience of voters with 10 new suitable locations identified and assessed to meet the increase in numbers of polling districts and voter numbers
  - Parish wards will be contained within their own polling districts

## **3. Results of Consultation & Further Decisions/Actions Required**

- 3.1 No comments have been received from the public during the consultation process.
- 3.2 Final decisions are required in 3 wards as detailed in Appendix A:
- Chalvey Green Ward (page 4, Appendix A)
- PD CAA – option of either a) Slough Ice Rink (existing polling station) or b) Pakistani Welfare Association (new venue)

Labour Party propose option b) PWA (Appendix B)

**Recommendation:** To designate the PWA building as the polling station for this area due to its more central location and better access for the majority of voters in this polling district

- Cippenham Green Ward (page 5, Appendix A)

PD CGA – option of either a) Cippenham Baptist Church (existing polling station) or b) St Andrew’s Shared Church (new venue)

Labour Party propose option b) St. Andrew’s Church (Appendix B)

**Recommendation:** To designate St. Andrew’s Shared Church as the polling station for this area as the current polling station Cippenham Baptist Church sits just outside the polling district.

- Langley Marish Ward (page 14, Appendix A)

PD LAA – option of either a) Kedermister Hall (existing polling station) or b) Langley Library (new venue)

Labour Party propose option a) Kedermister Hall (Appendix B)

**Recommendation:** To designate Kedermister Hall as the polling station for this area as this existing station is well known by voters in the area

PD LAB – option of either a) Langley Free Church (existing polling station) or b) Marish Primary School (new venue)

Labour Party propose option a) Langley Free Church

**Recommendation:** To designate Langley Free Church as the polling station for this area as this avoids disruption to pupils attending the school

- 3.3 Consideration to be given to changes in Upton Lea Ward (see map on page 21, Appendix A). Current proposals are for 2 polling districts utilising existing polling stations as follows:

- a) PD UPA – Upton Lea Community Centre
- b) PD UPB – Mobile Unit (Portacabin) in Goodman Park

It has subsequently been recognised that the main road A412, Uxbridge Road represents a challenging barrier for approx. 1,000 voters to the east of PD UPA, to access Upton Lea Community Centre to vote.

Options for change are to either

- a) create an additional polling district to increase to 3 (UPC) and re-site an additional mobile unit back to Rochford Gardens, or to

- b) relocate all those voters to the mobile polling station in PD UPB.

Labour Party propose option b) relocate identified voters to PD UBB (Appendix C).

**Recommendation:** To create a third polling district east of the A412 and north of the canal with a mobile polling station as previously sited in Rochford Gardens. This would avoid the need for around 1,000 voters in that area to cross either of those two major barriers i.e. road and canal to access either of the 2 recommended polling stations

- 3.4 Minor amendments to boundaries splitting polling districts in Cippenham Manor and Cippenham Village wards to support voters improved access to a polling station have been requested by the Labour Group (Appendix B). The changes affecting a small number of voters have been considered and agreed by the Returning Officer.
- 3.5 Following agreement of this report Electoral Services will publish a revised electoral register to take account of the new wards, polling districts and places on 1<sup>st</sup> February 2023.

#### **4. Additional Information**

- 4.1 Voters will be made aware of these changes during the planning of forthcoming May elections by the Returning Officer.
- 4.2 Following the parliamentary boundary review by the Boundary Commission for England it is likely further changes will be required to align new ward boundaries with any changes to the parliamentary boundary. Final recommendations will go to Parliament by July 2023.
- 4.3 In the event of any dissatisfaction with the proposals appeals can be made from certain persons or bodies on specific grounds to the Electoral Commission:

The Electoral Commission  
3 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8YZ  
Tel: 0333 103 1928

#### **5. Implications of the Recommendation**

- 5.1 Financial implications
  - 5.1.1 There will be an initial increase in costs as the first all-out elections in the borough will be held in 21 wards as opposed to the previous number 15 by thirds. Thereafter, savings are expected to be made in financial year 2024/25 as the council moves to a 4-yearly cycle of local elections.
- 5.2 Legal implications
  - 5.2.1 Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 states that for local government elections, the Council may divide the borough or any ward thereof into polling districts and may alter any polling districts. Any power to constitute polling districts for the purpose of local government elections shall be exercised so that electors from any parliamentary polling district wholly or partly within the electoral area can, in the absence of special circumstances, be allotted to a polling station within the parliamentary polling place for the district unless the parliamentary polling place is outside the electoral area. The Electoral Commission guidance confirms that outside of compulsory reviews, all polling places and polling stations should be kept under consideration and an evaluation of their suitability carried out after each election. The same steps should be followed as for a compulsory review. These

steps include carrying out a preliminary review to establish suitability and identify alternatives and assessment of current arrangements and proposals for change including assessing location, size, availability, and accessibility. Notice should be given of the review and there should be a consultation process. After considering all representations, the Council must decide on the most appropriate polling districts and polling places, which must be approved by the Council. The Electoral Registration Officer must make the necessary alterations to the electoral register. Finally once a decision is made, details of the new polling districts and places must be made available to the public.

5.2.2 Certain persons have a right to make representations to the Electoral Commission and if the Council did not meet the reasonable requirements of the electors or a body of electors or take sufficient account of the accessibility of disabled persons, it may direct the Council to make any alterations to the polling places.

5.3 Risk management implications

5.3.1 None specific within this report

5.4 Environmental implications

5.4.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this report

5.5 Equality implications

5.5.1 The Council has a duty to ensure the accessibility of all polling places to disabled voters and has considered this for all polling places as part of this review. Specifically, the Council has considered the Scope 2020 report 'Polls Apart 2010: Opening Elections to Disabled People'.

5.5.2 All polling places meet these requirements either through the existing infrastructure of the building or through the provision of temporary auxiliary aids to improve accessibility.

5.5.2 All polling stations are issued with low level polling booths with secrecy screens and temporary ramps are deployed where required. Polling station accessibility is kept under review in advance of each election through inspections and between elections through elector surveys and feedback.

## **6. Background Papers**

None.